JANUARY 31, 2023 • VOL XIV • ISSUE #3

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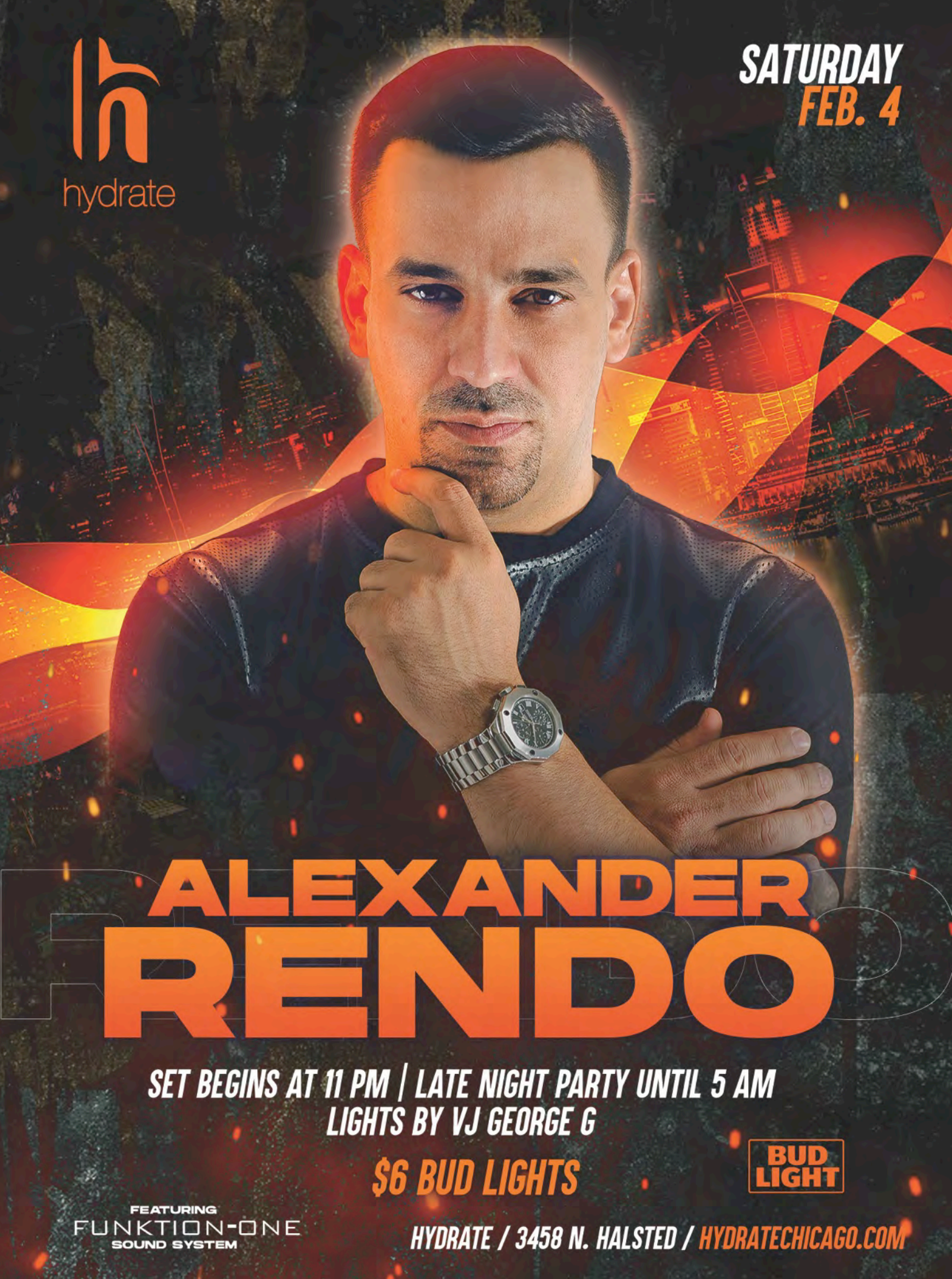
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GRAB MARGARET

The CHOsen one: An interview with Margaret Cho

By Gregg Shapiro

Photo BySergio Garcia

It's been a few years since queer comedian, actor, and activist Margaret Cho has done a stand-up comedy tour. In the interim, she's been acting in a variety of well-received movies (including "Fire Island") and TV shows (such as "Hacks" and "The Flight Attendant"). In other words, she's never far from our sight. That's a good thing! For 2023, Cho will be embarking on a multi-city comedy tour, "Live and Livid," and it promises to be the live performance event of the year (sorry Madonna). Margaret was kind enough to answer a few questions before heading out on the road.

Gregg Shapiro: Margaret, I interviewed you last spring just before the movie "Fire Island" premiered. Since that time, the movie won the Gotham Awards' Ensemble Tribute, and was named on several end-of-the-year "best of" lists. Additionally, "Fire Island" is Certified Fresh on RottenTomatoes.com with a 94% rating. What does it mean to you to have been associated with such a well-received project?
Margaret Cho: I love it! I loved making it. I love the cast. I love Joel's (Kim Booster) vision. I love Andrew's (Ahn) directing. We are a family, and we've got to make sequels, prequels, a whole cinematic universe. I think that would be so valuable. Hopefully, we'll get to see that. I love them, they're my babies. I knew that everybody would love this movie. I loved this movie so much. I'm very proud of it and proud of everybody that worked on it

GS: The Lifetime sitcom "Drop Dead Diva," on which you played Terri Lee, has been brought back and is airing on the Hallmark Channel. How do you feel about the possibility of a whole new generation of viewers getting to see the show?
MC: I'm very proud of the work that I got to do on that show. It's really exciting that everybody gets to discover it again. I love that we get to show everybody what we did. It's so fun and it's a triumph.

GS: Do you have any favorite memories to share from "Drop Dead Diva"?
MC: I loved working with Liza Minnelli. My very favorite episode was all the stuff I got to do with Patty Duke. She was a legend. I kept trying to get her to come to a screening of "Valley of the Dolls" where we would interview her. She was like, "Oh, nobody wants to see that movie!" I'm like, "What? Are you crazy [laughs]? Everybody loves that movie." She was such a person to get to know and to work with. What an incredible actor and a lovely woman.

GS: You play Nurse Nina in the Apple TV+ educational children's series "Helpsters." What do you like best about that?
MC: The creatures. All of the puppets are so cute. I love working with puppeteers because they're actually very animated people. They're so charming and beautiful and fun, and fun to be with. I love (out actor) Rebecca Henderson (who plays Farmer Flynn). We played girlfriends, and now we're married on the show, we're married on "Helpsters." When I see her, I'm like, "We're doing so good in our relationship!" She was my girlfriend in the (2022) movie "Sex Appeal" on Hulu, and she and I are married on "Helpsters." She's my most successful relationship.

GS: "Helpsters" is from the makers of "Sesame Street," and being someone who was in her formative years when "Sesame Street" first started airing, would you say that it was a show that had an impact on you?
MC: Absolutely! In the '90s, I got to work with Kermit the Frog. I mean, talk about an NDA! If you work with a Muppet, like Kermit the Frog, in particular, you have to sign so many NDAs. I'm probably breaking an NDA right now. We had gone to this thing, and Kermit was my partner. We were doing shots with Gorbachev, Mikhail and Raisa Gorbachev were in the United States and they were being hosted by Jane Fonda and Ted Turner, to whom she was married at the time. I had not drunk alcohol in a long time, and they forced us to do

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Photo BySergio Garcia

shots. Kermit was like (in Kermit's voice), "Drink it! Drink it!" I couldn't not do a shot if Kermit's right there telling me to drink it. I've worked with a lot of Muppets, and I've had a lot of Muppet drama [laughs].

GS: Your 2023 North American tour is titled "Live & Livid." We certainly have a lot to be livid about, especially in the years following the 45th president, as well as the events of January 6th, and the deadly rise of White Nationalism. Were these sources of inspiration, and what else are you livid about?
MC: Yes! Also the attacks on drag queens, the attacks on queerness, the attacks on trans folks, the continual attacking of different parts of our community who are so important to us. Whether it's our athletes, like Brittney Griner. Whether it's trans kids. Drag queens, to me, who are front and center, the heart and joy of our community. It's where we celebrate, with drag. That's the most heartbreaking part of this is. They're taking down the really important part of community. The cheerful ones, the ones that we need. Well, not Bianca Del Rio [laughs]. Bianca's my favorite! They should be scared of drag queens! They will get read to filth. They should be afraid! Children are way safer at a drag show than they are in church!

GS: As of now, when we're talking, "Live & Livid" is scheduled to run through September with stops in 20 cities, including San Francisco. What does it mean to you when you get to perform for the hometown crowd?
MC: Oh, I love it. It's sort of still my hometown in a lot of ways. I have deep roots there. I spent so much time there, so it's still home in a lot of ways. It's meaningful and a cherished thing. But, also, I think I'm a citizen of everywhere. I've been everywhere, so it's all my home.

GS: It's been six years since you launched your previous tour, "Fresh Off the Bloat." What are you most looking forward to about returning to performing live again?
MC: I think we had a really difficult time throughout the pandemic and through this resetting of this idea of what the world is. It'll be great to greet people again in this new space. The gratitude that I have for live performance, and going to live shows and performances as it is, is a really special thing. I'm very excited.

GS: Are there any upcoming projects about which you're excited that you'd like to mention?
MC: Nothing that I can mention, as yet. But I'm really looking forward to this year. I have things that I'm working on that I'm really thrilled about. Things that are starting to come up that I'll be able to talk about soon. I'm working a lot, so I'm really happy about that.

GS: This interview is taking place on Friday the 13th. Are you superstitious, and if so, what superstitions do you observe?
MC: I love Friday the 13th! I love black cats. I love this whole notion of the cursed film or cursed TV show. There's something about it. Whether it's "The Exorcist" or "Poltergeist." Any of these ideas of things being ill-willed or bad omens. "The Omen!" I love horror, so to me it's a very special day. It's my happy day, my holiday.

Photo BySergio Garcia

GRAB A GIFT

Queer-ish Valentine's Gifts for the Queers You Love-ish: 2023 Ed-ish

By Mikey Rox

Spread the love this Valentine's Day with these festive, fun and sometimes frisky gifts to fill all your special someones' (hey, we don't judge) hearts with happiness and felt appreciation.

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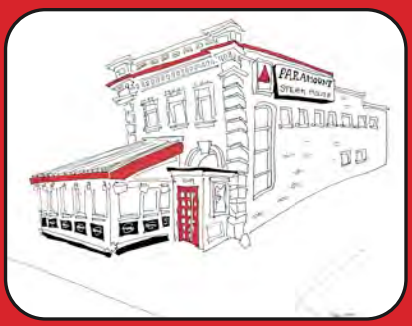
All the Restaurants

Former New Yorker magazine editor turned self-taught artist John Donohue recognizes that most Americans' first dates take place at restaurants (Starbucks is #1 while In-N-Out Burger clocks in at #2, according to a survey of Clover app users), which is why he's made it his mission to commemorate the occasion with signed, limited-edition prints of your fave romantic dining destinations, including Manhattan's 12 Chairs Café and Abilene Bar, Jaleo in D.C., and London's Noble Rot. $95, AllTheRestaurants.com



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One Love

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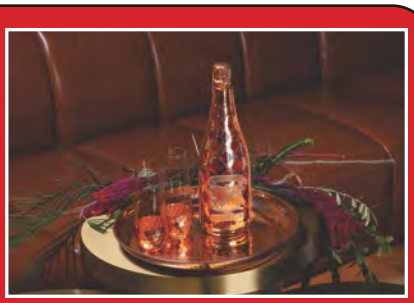

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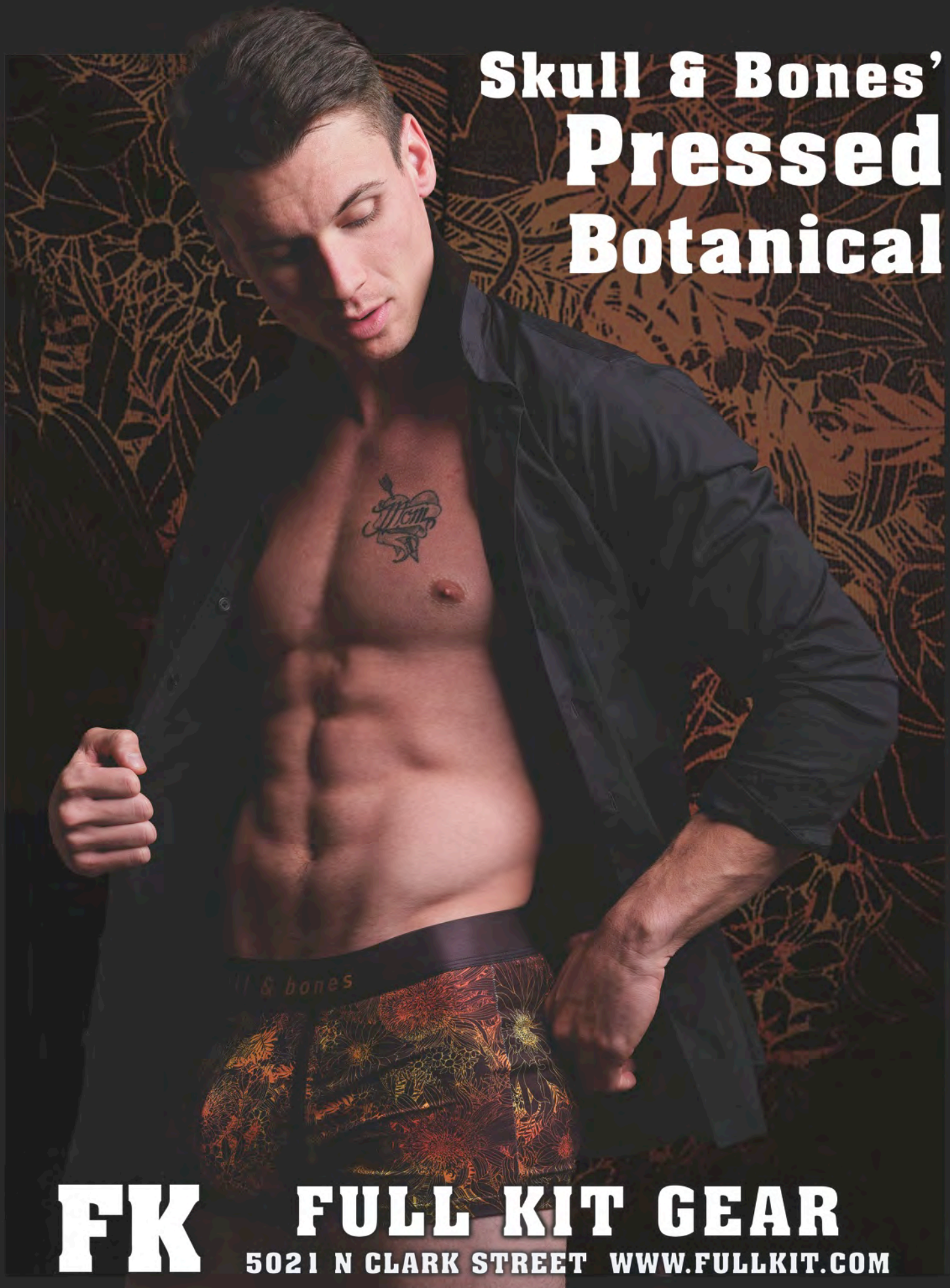
Mikey Rox is an award-winning journalist and LGBT lifestyle expert whose work has been published in more than 100 outlets across the world. Connect with Mikey on Instagram **@mikeyroxtravels**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GRAB KYLE

Bad Years

In new song, Queer artist Kyle Motsinger reflects on the long and difficult road he has travelled in the pursuit of his rock star dreams

By Mike Bahr

Kyle Motsinger was born and raised in the middle of cornfields in a small, conservative town outside of Peoria, Illinois. "I grew up singing Broadway tunes by a tractor," he remembers.

He moved to NYC after college, where he performed in Off-Broadway productions, released two albums and several singles including "Dark Shadows", based on the gothic sixties' series and film by Tim Burton. The music video for the song starred Kathryn Leigh Scott from the series and premiered to much fan acclaim at the Dark Shadows convention in Los Angeles.

As Kyle Motsinger approached his mid-thirties', he began to feel that he wasn't where he wanted to be in life. He channeled that frustration into a batch of new songs that appear on his upcoming album. His new single is "Bad Years", and it muses on his life's struggles and finding joy in conflict.

Mike Bahr:What was it like growing up gay in Peoria?
Kyle Motsinger:I had a good childhood but I was not out and dangerously uncool. I spent most of my time in theatre and pursuing brainy activities. Things became more complicated as I discovered my sexuality and started forming my own world opinions.

MB: Why did you stay in Illinois for college?
KM: My family couldn't afford to send me to a private university and a school out of Illinois was not an option. I went to a junior college, five minutes from my house, for my first year of college. I was scouted by Western Illinois University while singing a solo in Handel's Messiah. I auditioned and got in on a scholarship the next fall, eventually graduating with a BFA in Musical Theatre.

MB: How did you make your way to NYC?
KM: After college, I visited NYC and it just felt like home. I knew I had to move there. Two girls - that I knew from community theatre – and I decided to make the move together.

MB: What was that first week like in NYC?
KM: I remember being so excited! I was living in Astoria, Queens and feeling like an adult for the first time in my life. I wasn't scared. I was determined!

MB: How did you establish yourself in the theater scene?
KM: I did several cabarets and showed up at open mics. That's a whole community in itself. I started auditioning and within that first year, I met a casting director that believed in me and helped me to get my first Off-Broadway show in NYC.

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MB: What was that?
KM: Fancy Nancy the Musical. It was based on the popular children's books. We recorded a cast album on Ghostlight Records and I toured with the show.

MB: What did you learn about yourself from performing on stage?
KM: I learned that I have a great talent for acting a song. I can interpret a song and tell the story of it. That ability has carried over into my music.

MB: What led to your writing and recording your own songs?
KM: I have been writing for as long as I can remember. I wrote my first song for a talent show in high school. Through college I wrote, although the songs weren't very good. After Fancy Nancy closed, I decided to start writing about my own experiences and my own struggles. The flood gates opened and the songs poured out! Music took the focus of my creativity and I decided to record the songs. They became my first album in 2017!

Photo By Austin Ruffer

MB: Who would you compare your sound to?
KM: I think my sound is really a combination of the music I love. Listening to the shockingly vulnerable music of Tori Amos for the first time really helped me realize I wanted to write honest music about my experiences. I compare myself to Tori, Kate Bush, Elton John, and Billy Joel. There's also more than a little bit of musical theatre creeping into my sound. You can take the boy out of the theatre…

MB: Your new song is called "Bad Years." Have the last couple of years really been so bad?
KM: The world has been a bit of a dumpster fire for everyone these last couple of years! Personally, I've struggled financially as an indie artist. It's been tough trying to get the music out there without a record label.

MB: Did you ever get to the point where you wanted to pack things up and return to Illinois?
KM: No, NYC is home now. I'm here for the long haul. I still have a lot of dreams that involve this city!

MB: What is your idea of perfect happiness?
KM: I love that question. Happiness is being able to do what you love while being surrounded by people you love. I love performing on stage and being surrounded by friends and people who enjoy my music. My greatest fear is something happening that would prevent me from performing.
MB: What is your most treasured possession?
KM: Nothing is irreplaceable but I

think my keyboard is my most treasured possession.

MB: If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

KM: I wish I were better at networking!

MB: What is the trait you most deplore in others?

KM: I hate when people try to minimize other people's joy. I don't think you should tell other people they are wrong for liking something.

MB: Would you date someone with a ginger fetish?

KM: Of course! It would work out well for me!

MB: Have you ever been with a ginger yourself?

KM: Yes, I have! Gingers do it better!

MB:How do you measure success today?

KM: I had a guy from the UK recognize me at my job here in NYC. He told me he listened to and loved my last album. Sure, I'm broke, but that sure felt like success to me!

Kyle Motsinger's "Bad Years" is available on Apple Music, Spotify and all digital platforms. Visit ***www.kylemotsinger.com.*** *Follow on Instagram @ kylemotsinger*

Photo By Austin Ruffer

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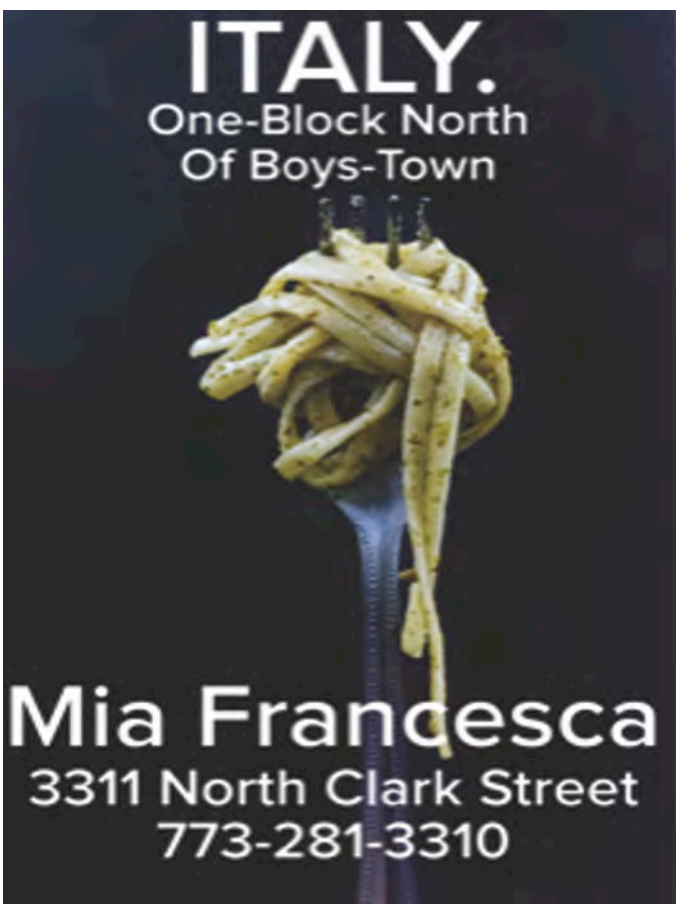

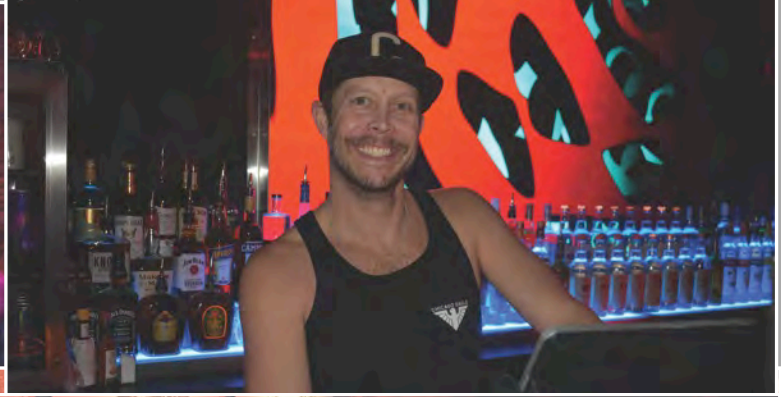

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GRAB ANN

Ann Hampton Callaway has the "Fever"

By Gregg Shapiro

More than 30 years since the release of her debut album, out jazz vocalist and songwriter Ann Hampton Callaway shows no sign of slowing down. With well over a dozen albums to her name, including live and holiday recordings, as well as collaborations with her sister Liz Callaway, Ann is a prolific recording artist. Additionally, her songs have appeared on movie soundtracks, and more significantly on albums by Barbra Streisand. She's even comfortable joking about what may be her most famous tune, the theme song to the popular '90s sitcom, "The Nanny" (starring Fran Drescher). As if that wasn't enough, Callaway is known as a dynamic live performer who regularly tours with themed concerts. Her latest album, "Fever: A Peggy Lee Celebration!" (Palmetto), a musical love letter to Peggy Lee, is being released, fittingly enough on Valentine's Day 2023. Callaway was generous enough to make time in her busy schedule in advance of the album's release. [Ann Hampton Callaway peforms on 4/23/23 at City Winery.]

Gregg Shapiro: Ann, it's been a few years since I've interviewed you. In the interim, you moved to Arizona. What has the experience of living in Arizona been like for you?
Ann Hampton Callaway: Tucson, Arizona is where I moved, because my wife is from Tucson, and she really missed being with her family and all her lifelong friends. It's been a really beautiful sanctuary for us during the pandemic and during a very busy touring schedule we come home to this beautiful historic home and feel a sense of peace and community. We sort of feel like we live in the world, wherever we are, but when we come home we just feel so relaxed and lovely and cozy. It's a nice place to get our sanity back with the busy lives that we lead.

GS: Your artist legacy series has featured your musical tributes to Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, and Linda Ronstadt…
AHC: …and Barbra Streisand. My (artist legacy series) recordings have been Ella and Sarah. Then I did a CD called "Signature" where it was a compilation of tributes to my favorite male and female jazz singers. I like saying thank you and I like studying people and finding out how to do a portrait of them musically that's still allows me to be myself as a singer.

GS: Did Peggy Lee's centennial, as well as the 20th anniversary of her passing, have anything to do with why she's the focus of your new album "Fever: A Peggy Lee Celebration!"?
AHC: Yes. The centennial was very much a time when I thought I could finally do a serious portrait of her in the way that I gave the artistic attention to these other wonderful artists that I have covered. Since I've been a friend of the Peggy Lee family for so long – I met them in 2003. I had performed symphony concerts honoring her. I've learned so much about her over the years. She's been a lifelong influence for me. It seemed like the perfect time to do a serious musical portrait of her for my live concerts. When Missi from Palmetto Records asked me "What do you want to do?" We'd just finished a great run in New York and my previous record was "Jazz Goes to the Movies." We did that recording a few months after we had done a long run and I found that it was such a great situation to record in because the band was so deep into the songs that it could be recorded in a day and it could be musically exciting and satisfying. It was just the aligning of stars for me to be able to finally write my love

MEETING HOUSE
TAVERN

Photos By Anthony Meade

letter (to Peggy Lee) through a recording, as well as a live show. One of the things that makes the record special is that because I'm friends with Peggy's granddaughter Holly Foster Wells, I had access to so many wonderful things, such as getting an unpublished poem by Peggy Lee and getting to write music for it and singing a song that had never been released as a recording before. Things like that that make it not just a bunch of Peggy Lee songs but something that tells a story about her life and shows the uniqueness of her contribution as a songwriter, which I think has been really a neglected part of her career in terms of people understanding what a huge difference she made in the industry.

GS: Do you remember the first Peggy Lee song you ever heard?
AHC: I'm pretty sure it was "Fever." That came out the year that I was born. My father, I think, had a little bit of a crush on Peggy. I just remember seeing that beautiful blonde lady with her pretty voice and thinking, "Wow, she seems really magical." As I became a mature person and a person who loved jazz and great music, then I got to know who she was and what she was about. But "Fever," and that whole time period, was some of her best records, and my parents had a hefty collection of Peggy Lee albums, including that one.

GS: With so many Lee originals from which to choose, how were you able to narrow it down to "I Don't Know Enough About You," "I Love Being Here With You," "Johnny Guitar," "Where Can I Go Without You?," "Angels On Your Pillow," and the "This Is A Very Special Day/It's A Good Day" medley?
AHC: You have to understand that when I do these shows, I tell stories that help people to care more about her as a singer which helps the songs to have a lot more resonance. Some of the stories of my live show portray when she was finally getting to accept the fact that she did want to be a singer, and not just be a retired singer and a devoted wife and mother. She started writing with her husband, and those hit songs that she wrote, that's a part of the storytelling. Her love affair with David Barbour, who was very much the real key to her heart, and yet kind of a tragic relationship, became a throughline in the story. How did she cope with it? How did she feel? How did she express herself? There's a lot of resonance in her life story that these songs reflect and that was one of the main influences of why I narrowed them down. Also, I just thought they were exquisite songs. I have two songs from her Peggy Lee Broadway show called "Peg" in 1983. "Angels on your Pillow," and the song that had never been released before, "The Other Half of Me," are both from that show and co-written with Paul Horner, who is a wonderful composer who I don't believe has really gotten his due in terms of the quality of music that he writes. He's a delightful gentleman who I have spoken with on the phone many times. I felt like since she wanted to write about her life in that show and share what mattered to her, that those two songs would be an excellent emotional source of resonance for the record,

GS: When you approach Lee's covers of songs that were written by others did you feel pulled towards honoring her rendition or trying to leave your own mark, or maybe a combination of both?
AHC: It was definitely a combination of both, on "Fever," and a few other pieces. Most of the record has my

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own stamp on things, but “Fever” is so iconic I didn't really feel like I could do much. I've heard many recordings of people singing “Fever” that did not come near what I think of as the sultry, sexy power of what Peggy Lee did. How I made that my own was I wrote a verse. She wrote new verses and a bridge to “Fever” to make it a hit song. I wrote about her and her relationship with Dave Barbour. We put piano in it that was not something she had in her rendition. Some of the really iconic things that make people go, “Oh my God. I love that!” It's hard not to put a little bit of that in. My favorite arranger from that period is Nelson Riddle, and he did such great work for her. So, the duet that I do (on “The Glory of Love”) with John Pizzarelli, who is one of my favorite artists of my generation, was based on his arrangement of that. I think it has a very charming quality to it, and I didn't think I could do better.

GS: Speaking of covers, Lee’s creative relationship with songwriting duo Lieber and Stoller resulted in one of her biggest hits “Is That All There Is?,” as well as entire album of their songs, including “Ready to Begin Again,” which was recently covered by fellow North Shore native Christine Ebersole on her new album.
AHC: Oh, wow!

GS: Had you considered recording any of the Lieber and Stoller tunes?
AHC: I recorded “I'm A Woman,” and I was not happy with it. I didn’t feel it was my best work, so I took it off the record even though I think it's such a great song. I had already recorded the Lieber/Stoller “Is That All There Is?,” which I thought I did such a lovely job of, on my album “Signature.” I didn't think I wanted to do another version for this record. It's an interesting piece because sometimes people don't understand how meaningful it was. I do that song in my live shows, but because I already thought I covered it well in that other record I didn't re-explore it for another recording. I was very disappointed that “I'm A Woman” didn't sound better. It also didn't quite fit how the album evolved. It’s sort of a sultry, beautiful listening experience. It’s romantic and it’s coming out around Valentine's Day. It seemed sort of jarring in the setting with the rest of the songs. It was a difficult thing to say, “All right, I'm cutting this song,” because I love it so much.

GS: We’re talking a few days before Christmas, and my friend Dan recently turned me onto Peggy Lee’s stunning song “My Dear Acquaintance (A Happy New Year).” Do you have a favorite Peggy Lee holiday song?
AHC: That remains to be explored, but she has written some lovely pieces. That's a great idea for me to look at. I love that song. It's very charming. Who knows? I might sit at my piano and play it before the new year begins.

GS: In your opinion, as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, do you think Peggy Lee had an awareness of her gay following?
AHC: That’s a good question. I should talk to her granddaughter about it. I can't imagine any singer, who becomes iconic, is not partly due to the gay following. I think, historically, the great female vocalists have presented themselves in such a way that they become a role model for someone. Peggy Lee would be a perfect role model for the LGBTQ community because she had endured so many incredible challenges in her life. She showed the power of always following her heart and always finding the silver linings in life. Always seeing whatever shred of positivity there could be. The way that she used her creativity in so many different ways. She loved her audience. She passionately loved performing. She performed when she was in terrible health and needed an oxygen machine because she didn't want her fans to feel like she left them. I don't know that she's notorious like Bette Midler and Barbra Streisand as a gay icon, but I think she is a very worthy person to be celebrated by my fellow gay community.
GS: Have you started thinking about who’s next in the Artist Legacy series?
AHC: Right now, my legacy series is taking a little turn in the new year. After honoring one of the people who helped me have a road ahead to be a singer/songwriter, I'm going to be releasing a record later in 2023 called “Finding Beauty” of all my original songs. I’ve written some of these songs with great people like Alan Bergman. Melissa Manchester

and I are working on the last song right now. I think because the pandemic made me feel like, “Oh my goodness, we don't know how long we have,” what's really important to me is that I have so many songs that haven't been heard or recorded, this is going to be a part of my life now where I want to give more attention to how I see the world, what I learned in my life, and what matters to me. It takes a certain amount of courage to do something that people don't necessarily know they want to hear. Although people who come to my shows frequently tell me that their favorite songs are the ones that I wrote. Even though I have hits on Barbra Streisand's records and I've written with people like Carole King and many other wonderful people, it's still kind of a little bit of a secret of my songwriting. They just think I wrote and sang “The Nanny” theme [laughs]. But there will be other people that I want to portray. I did a lovely show about Judy Garland. This year is her actual centennial, and I would have loved to have done something on her, as well, in a recording. What I'd love to do is do all my divas and have a box set of these shows. I think that would be a really exciting project.

GS: Finally, Oscar-nominated actress Michelle Williams has been cast to play Peggy Lee in gay filmmaker Todd Haynes' Lee biopic “Fever.” What do you think of that choice?
AHC: I think it's a brilliant choice! She's an incredibly exciting actress, especially when I saw her portrayal of Gwen Verdon in “Fosse/Verdon.” She's such an extraordinary actress. Her ability to create somebody who has many sides to them at the same time will serve her very well playing Peggy Lee. She has the sensuality, the intelligence, the vulnerability, and she has the power. I know how strongly Holly feels about her playing her grandmother. If Holly believes in her, I have no doubt she will give us a sensational performance, and probably get an Oscar nomination for it. That would be my guess.

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Daily Specials;

MONDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: . $5 Jager, Fireball & Malort $4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), $4StoliCocktails (Any Flavor). **@mosphere:** $5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm. **Cell Block:** Open 4pm-2am. **Charlies:** Bingo 7 – 11 pm Dancing until close**. D.S.Tequila Co:** $5 10oz Margaritas. **Hydrate:** Lips and Mascara Doors at 8pm Show at 10pm. **Lark:** Happy Hour 5-7pm, Bottles of Wine 50% off with dinner entree purchase. **Lucky Horseshoe:** Open at 4pm, Dancers 8pm. **North End:** Open at 11am, $5 Well Drinks. **Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview:** Open 2pm-2am, $5 Drafts & Cans, $6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, $7 Glasses of Wine, $8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, $5 Bud Lights 4-6pm.**Shakers on Clark:** Comedy Night $1 off Well Drinks and Well Shots. **Sidetrack:** Open at 3pm, Musical Monday Show Tunes 8pm-2am. **Steamworks:** Every 3rd Monday TM4M (Trans Men For Men) 8pm-2am. **The Sofo Tap:** $4 Whiskey, Rye& Bourbon $3 Miller Lite Drafts $5Big Ass Long Islands, $4 Tallboys,$5Jager, Fireball & Malort, $4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR,Hamm's)Free Darts. **Touche:** Euchre Night, Come out and Play 7-10pm Sports on our screens Club room Open!.

TUESDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: . $5 Jager, Fireball & Malort $4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), $6 Big Miller Lite Drafts $3 House Shots. **@mosphere:** $5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, Game Night with Tony. **Cell Block:** Open 4pm-2am. **Charlie's:** TuneUp Tuesday Karaoke 7 – 11PM, Tag Team Tuesdays 11p – 2am, Dancing until close. **D.S.Tequila Co: .**50cent Wing Night 5pm-10pm, Must Purchase a drink for special. Dine in Only. **Hydrate:** TatTuesday XXL Doors open at 8pm. **Kit Kat Lounge:** Happy Hour 5-7pm $8.95 Martinis **Lark:** 50% Off Bottles of Wine with any Entree Purchase, Bud Light $5, Select Wine $5, Well Cocktails $6 5-7pm 50%off Bottles of Wine with purchase of an Entree. **Lucky Horseshoe:** Open at 6pm. Dancers at 8pm. Open auditions for male dancers 7pm. $5 drink specials. **Meeting House Tavern:** $6 Big Miller Lite Drafts, $3 House Shots, $5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, $4 Tallboy Beers. **North End:** Open at 11am, $5 Canned Beers, Seltzers & Ciders. **Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview:** Open 2pm-2am, $5 Drafts & Cans, $6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, $7 Glasses of Wine, $8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, $5 Bud Lights 4-6pm.**Shakers on Clark:** Game Night, Free Pool, $3 Domestic Bud, Bud Light, Michelob Ultra, Miller Lite, Miller High Life and PBR. **Sidetrack:** Open at 3pm, Trivia Tuesday 8-10pm, TRL Tuesday: Totally Rad Line-up of 90's-to-Now Music Videos 10pm-2am, OUTspoken LGBTQ+ Storytelling 1st Tuesday of the month from 7-9pm. **Steamworks:** Every Tuesday 4 pm – 4 am Guys Under 25 Get In Free* (*Free 30 day membership and free locker). **The Sofo Tap:** $4 Premium Well Cockttails, $4 Tallboys, 5Jager, Fireball & Malort, $4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR,Hamm's)FreeDarts.**Touche:**Hardcore Cruisin' No Cell Phones/Wifi.

WEDNESDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: $5 Jager, Fireball & Malort $4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's),.$4 Premium Well Cocktails. **@mosphere:** $5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm. **Cell Block:** Open 4pm-2am. **Charlie's:** Country Line Dancing 7 – 10pm, Sapphire's Secret Shadows 10pm – 1 am, Dancing until close.**Kit Kat Lounge:** Happy Hour 5-7pm $8.95 Martinis **Lark:** Free Bingo, 50% Off Nachos & Totchos, $8 Villa One Margaritas Frozen or on the Rocks, Traditional Flavor only. Bud Light $5, Select Wine $5, Well Cocktails $6 5-7pm.**Lark:** Happy Hour 5-7pm $4 Dud Light Drafts $6 Well Cocktails. Buy One Pizza Get one half off Dine In Only**Lucky Horseshoe:** Open at 6pm Dancers at 8pm. $5 drink specials. **Meeting House Tavern:** $3 Miller Lite Drafts, $4 Stolis (All Flavors), $5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, $4 Tallboy Beers. **North End:** Open at 11am $5 Lagunitas Draft & Cans. **Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview:** Open 2pm-2am, $5 Drafts & Cans, $6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, $7 Glasses of Wine, $8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, $5 Bud Lights 4-6pm **Shakers on Clark:** Karaoke Night $1 Off Long Islands. **Sidetrack:** Open at 3pm, All Things Taylor & Ariana 1st Wed of month, All Things Beyoncé 2nd Wed of month, All Things Gaga 3rd Wed of month, All Things Britney & Rihanna last Wed of month: all 9pm-2am. **Steamworks:** Bear Hump Every second Wednesday 6-9pm A monthly mid-week gathering of Furry Men. **The Sofo Tap:** $3 House Shots, $4 Titos Coctails,$6Big Miller Lite Drafts. $5Jager, Fireball & Malort, $4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR,Hamm's)Free Darts. **Touche:**Jockstrap Night. Free Clothing Check.

THURSDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: $5 Jager, Fireball & Malort $4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Whiskey, Rye & Bourbon.**@mosphere:** $5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, RuPaul Drag Race All Stars 6 Viewing Party - 7pm. **Charlie's:** Survivor 10 pm – 1 am, Dancing Until Close. **D.S.Tequila Co:** Bottomless Tacos! $23.95 5pm-10pm , Must purchase a beverage for special. Dine in Only. **Kit Kat Lounge:** Happy Hour 5-7pm $8.95 Martinis. **Lark:** Happy Hour 5-7pm $4 Dud Light Drafts $6 Well Cocktails . 7pm Extreme Bing with Vian Dejour. 50%off Nachos or Tatchos $8 Villa One Margaritas Frozen or on the Rocks Tradional Flavor Only.**Lucky Horseshoe:** Open at 6pm. Dancers at 8pm. $5 drink specials. **Meeting House Tavern:** $5 You Call It's, $5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, $4 Tallboy Beers. **North End:** Open at 11am, $5 Deep Eddy Cocktails **Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview:** Open 2pm-2am, $5 Drafts & Cans, $6 Stoli Vodka Cocktails, $7 Glasses of Wine, $8 Larceny Old Fashioneds, $5 Bud Lights 4-6pm. **Shakers on Clark:** Darts Night $1 off Fireball, Jager, Malort and Well Shots, $2.50 PBR Cans. **Sidetrack:** Open at 3pm, Let's Go Thursdays with Alex Kay & Friends 9pm-2am. **Steamworks:** Lights Out Thursdays, The Club goes Dark Every Thursday 4pm-4am. **The Sofo Tap:** $4 Premium Well Cocktails $4 TallBoys, $5Jager, Fireball & Malort, $4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR,Hamm's)Free Darts. **Touche:** Throwback Thursdays70's& 80's Music & Porn by BijouVideo.

GRAB YOUR FRIENDS

FRIDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: . $5 Jager, Fireball & Malort $4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), $7 Big Miller Lite Drafts$3 House Shots.**@mosphere:** $5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, Dancers 10pm-1am. **Baton Show Lounge:** Doors open at 6pm, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. **Cell Block:** Open 4pm-2am. **Charlie's:** 1st and 3rd Fierce Fridays 10p – 1am, 2nd Fierce Fridays - Traffic Light Party 10p – 1am, 4th Fierce Fridays - Glow Up Party 10p – 1am, 5th Fierce Fridays – Strut 10p – 1am, Dancing until close.**D.S.Tequila Co:** TGIFSpecial $5 Effen Cocktails and $4 Hornitos Shots.**Hydrate:**Fresh Faces A New Drag Competition Second and Forth Friday of the Month. **Kit Kat Lounge:** Happy Hour 5-7pm $8.95 Martinis. **Lark:** Happy Hour5-7pm $4 Dud Light Drafts $6 Well Cocktails .Every Friday from **Meeting House Tavern:** $5 Tito's, $7 Big Miller Lite Drafts, $5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, $4 Tallboy Beers. **North End:** Open at 11am, $3 Miller Lite Drafts 4-7pm. **Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview:** Weekend Buckets $25 All Day, Miller Lite, Corona Extra, Truly Punch Variety, Truly Wild Berry Seltzer, Freshie Tequila Seltzer (5 Cans per Bucket - Cannot mix and match.) **Shakers:** $4 Domestic Bottles $5 Well Mixed Drinks, $10 Giant 23oz Long Islands in 22 flavors. **Sidetrack:** Open at 3pm, TGIF Show Tunes 4-9pm, Friday Night Dance Party 9pm-2am..**The Sofo Tap:** $7 Big Miller LiteDrafts $3 HouseShots. $5Jager, Fireball & Malort, $4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR,Hamm's)Free Darts.**Touche:** 1/20Cowboy RoundUp 1/27 Porn Poker Party.

SATURDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: . $5 Jager, Fireball & Malort $4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Lagunitas IPADrafts $5 Premium Well Cocktails$12 mimosa Carafes. **@mosphere:** $5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 3pm-5pm, Dancers 10pm -1am. **Baton Show Lounge:** Doors open at 6pm, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. **Cell Block:** Open 2pm-3am. **Charlie's:** Country Line Dancing 7 – 10pm, The Main Event 10pm – 1am Dancing until Close. **Lark:** Lakeviews #1 Free flowing Brunch11am-3pm **Lucky Horseshoe:** Open with dancers at 3pm. $5 drink specials. **Meeting House Tavern:** $5 Signature Margaritas, $5 Premium Well Cocktails, $12 Mimosa Carafes, $5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, $4 Tallboy Beers. **North End:** Open at 11am, $3 Miller Lite Drafts 11am-2pm. **Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview:** $10 Champagne Bottles, $5 Juice Kits, $3 Bud Lights 12-2pm, Weekend Buckets $25 All Day, Miller Lite, Corona Extra, Truly Punch Variety, Truly Wild Berry Seltzer, Freshie Tequila Seltzer (5 Cans per Bucket - Cannot mix and match.). **Sidetrack:** Open at 1pm, SaturGay Drag & Games with Sasha & Zamora Love 3-6pm, Saturday Night Dance Party 9pm-3am, Dog Day 1st Saturday of the month 1-5pm. **The Sofo Tap:** $4 Lost Coast Tangerine Wheat $5 Signature Margaritas, $4 Tallboys, $5Jager, Fireball & Malort, $4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR,Hamm's)Free Darts. **Touche:**1/21 Gear Night Dress Code in Clubroom BNC 6pm.1/28RIPE Party Dim Lights, Deep Beats, Go-go Dudes DJ Harry T.

SUNDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: .$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort $4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Signature Margaritas $12 Mimosa Carafes.**@mosphere:** $6 Jack Products, $4 Domestic Draft, House Shots $2. **Baton Show Lounge:** Doors Open at 11am, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. **Cell Block:** Open 2pm-2am **Charlie's:** Queeriod! Every other Sunday 5pm – 7pm, Singsational Sunday Karaoke 7pm – 11pm Mas Leche 11pm – 1am, Dancing until close. **D.S.Tequila Co:** CoyoteUglyDrag Brunch$50all Inclusive food and beverage package plus Drag Show.**Hydrate:** Doors open at 2pm Northalsted's Official after Brunch party. **Kit Kat Lounge:** Divalicious brunch with Madam X 11am-3pm, Happy Hour 4-7pm $8.95 Martinis . **Lark:** Lakeviews #1 Free flowing Brunch11am-3pm **Lucky Horseshoe:** Open with dancers at 3pm. $5 drink specials. **Meeting House Tavern:** $3 House Shots, $5 Premium Well Cocktails, $12 Mimosa Carafes, $5 Frozens, $5 Jäger, Fireball & Malort, $4 Tallboy Beers. **North End:** Open at 11am, $3 Miller Lite Drafts 7-10pm **Replay Beer & Bourbon Lakeview:** $10 Champagne Bottles, $5 Juice Kits, $3 Bud Lights 12-2pm, Weekend Buckets $25 All Day, Miller Lite, Corona Extra, Truly Punch Variety, Truly Wild Berry Seltzer, Freshie Tequila Seltzer (5 Cans per Bucket - Cannot mix and match.) **Sidetrack:** Open at 1pm, Sunday Funday Show Tunes 4-9pm, Sunday Funday After Dark Dance Party 9pm-2am **The Sofo Tap:** $7 Big MillerLite Drafts, $6 Chicago Handshake, $5 Prairie Vodka Cocktails, $5Jager, Fireball & Malort.$4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR,Hamm's)Free Darts.**Touche:** Beer Bust $2 Bud Light Drafts, Clubroom Opens 6pm, Movie Night 7pm.

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Top 30 Dance Chart this week

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	Artist	Title
1	Reve	Whitney (Nexus PD Intro Edit)
2	Autograf ft. Tiina	High On That New Love
3	D.O.D & Raphaella	Like You Do
4	3LAU	Too Late For Love
5	Alina Eremia	Party Song (MST)
6	INNA	Wherever You Go
7	SILK	Supply The Love
8	David Guetta & MORTEN	You Can't Change Me ft. RAYE (Radio)
9	Agnes	Love and Appreciation
10	Linney	Super Human
11	Tove Lo	2 Die 4
12	VASSY x Bingo Players x Disco Fries	Pieces
13	NIIKO X SWAE ft. Allie Crystal	Nothing On Earth
14	Hayden James	Good Life ft. Emie (Radio Edit)
15	Tobtok & Adam Griffin	Overnight
16	Tungevaag x Lovespeake	I Knew It Was You
17	Armin Van Buuren	Roll The Dice ft. Philip Strand (Intro Radio Edit)
18	SZA	Shirt (KREAM Remix)
19	DubDogz x Bruno Be x Ghostt	Sleepwalking ft. The Chain Gang of 1974
20	Fred again	Clara (The Night Is Dark)
21	Joel Corry x David Guetta x Bryson Tiller	What Would You Do
22	Damon Sharpe ft. Tima Dee	Naughty Girl
23	Lola Audreys	Miami (Majestic Remix)
24	Dillon Francis x ILLENIUM & EVAN GIIA	Don't Let Me Let Go
25	Felix Jaehn	Wishlist
26	Tiesto ft. Tate McRae	1035
27	Mahalo x DLMT	Body Love
28	Kx5 & Elderbrook	When I Talk
29	L.GU. & Lewyn	Didnt Even Say Goodbye
30	ACRAZE ft. Goodboys	Believe

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SAT 02.04
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FRI 02.10
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POSITIVE THOUGHTS

How I Ended My Disability Benefits and Navigated the Frustrating System

Charles Sanchez

A couple of years ago, a friend of mine called me a deadbeat. Not directly, but she worked at the time for a city health insurance company, and fraud was her hot button. She was talking about people who were on disability but were healthy enough to work.

"They're lying! They're cheating the system! Bunch of deadbeats!" she cried.

Like me, I shamefully thought.

In 2003, I was hospitalized while living in Little Rock, Arkansas. Being diagnosed with histoplasmosis, thrush and pneumocystis pneumonia is a hell of a way to find out you have AIDS. In the three-plus weeks that I was in the hospital, most of that time I was in a drug-induced coma and fighting for my life. While I was enjoying the bliss of anesthesia (the doctor referred to it as "milk of amnesia"), my amazing parents took care of all the messy stuff and filled out the paperwork for me to receive government benefits. By the time I was released from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Hospital, the machine was already in motion, and I received my first government check shortly thereafter. I was also enrolled in Medicare, Medicaid, and the Arkansas AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP). I went from someone who worked sometimes three jobs at a time to someone not working and living on disability.

Living on government benefits is odd. I was receiving a monthly check, but it wasn't easy to pay all my bills, eat and have a bit of a life solely with the disability. I was grateful that people living on assistance are allowed to work part-time, as long as they make less than a certain amount each month. It's kind of like a gilded cage: The government money is nice, but you have very little freedom.

I also felt terribly guilty. When so much of who we are is defined by what we do, telling a cute guy at a cocktail party that I'm living on disability isn't sexy. In this country, we're taught that to be on any kind of government assistance is shameful, that one should be able to pull himself up by his bootstraps. Theoretical linguist Noam Chomsky is quoted as saying that public assistance is based on the principle that we care about other people. "You care whether the widow across town, a disabled widow, is going to be able to have food to eat," he said. But the reality is, in this country, we feel that if that widow is able to wheel herself to the Piggly Wiggly, she's able to get a job as a greeter at Walmart.

Maintaining Health Insurance While on Disability

After a few years, I regained my strength and learned how to navigate the world as a person living with HIV. I was doing some part-time work, enough to feed me and get me to a movie every now and again. The guilt of being on assistance began to compound since I didn't feel like I was disabled. But there was another issue with living on disability: the health insurance.

HIV medications and treatments are not cheap. When I first saw the bill for my monthly medications and it was in the thousands, I was shocked. I never realized how expensive I was! Prior to my diagnosis, in my career as an actor/waiter/bartender, I rarely had a job that provided health insurance. I don't have a college degree (I graduated from the American Musical and Dramatic Academy, but no degree), so if I did get off disability, the question wasn't how would I pay my rent, but how would I pay off the thousands of dollars of monthly medical delights that I'd gotten used to, like lifesaving drugs and doctors? Going back into the food and beverage industry seemed like a slow, soul-crushing suicide, and most restaurants don't provide health (or any) benefits. It looked like the best way for me to keep myself alive was to stay on disability so that I'd have health insurance. So I did.

Fast forward to March 2021. Now living in New York (since 2008), I started getting envelopes packed with paper from Social Security Disability, saying that I was "under review." They said that it looked like I'd been making too much money and may no longer qualify for benefits. There is a Ticket to Work program, where someone on disability can work for what they call the trial work period, but although I never enrolled in that, the government considered every month that I made more than the allotted amount to be part of the trial work period. According to their records, I reached that threshold in 2017, and I have made more than I should have consistently since then. I couldn't fathom how my piddly jobs, ranging from envelope-stuffing office work to conducting phone surveys or the occasional article I'd write, could cause a red flag to pop up — but, apparently, it did. I panicked.

Truth be told, I never really paid too much attention to the amount of money that's allowed as income above disability. The amount changes from year to year; they never send out a notice about the change. I knew I wasn't making that much. I mean, none of my part-time gigs paid a Rockefeller's salary. The nine months plus three deal was completely off my radar. I knew that sometimes I was making more than I was supposed to, sometimes less, so I figured it'd all even out. Admittedly, I was looking at the whole situation with both blinders and rose-colored glasses on.

After much paperwork back and forth with the sometimes-not-so-friendly folks at the government, tax returns being gone through, check stubs being searched for, and phone calls where I waited on hold for literally hours, I got the rough news in October of last year: I am no longer eligible for disability benefits because I've made too much money since 2017. Not only that, but the letter also stated that I owe $85,000 back to them in overpayments. "Please send a check immediately," the letter said. AS IF.

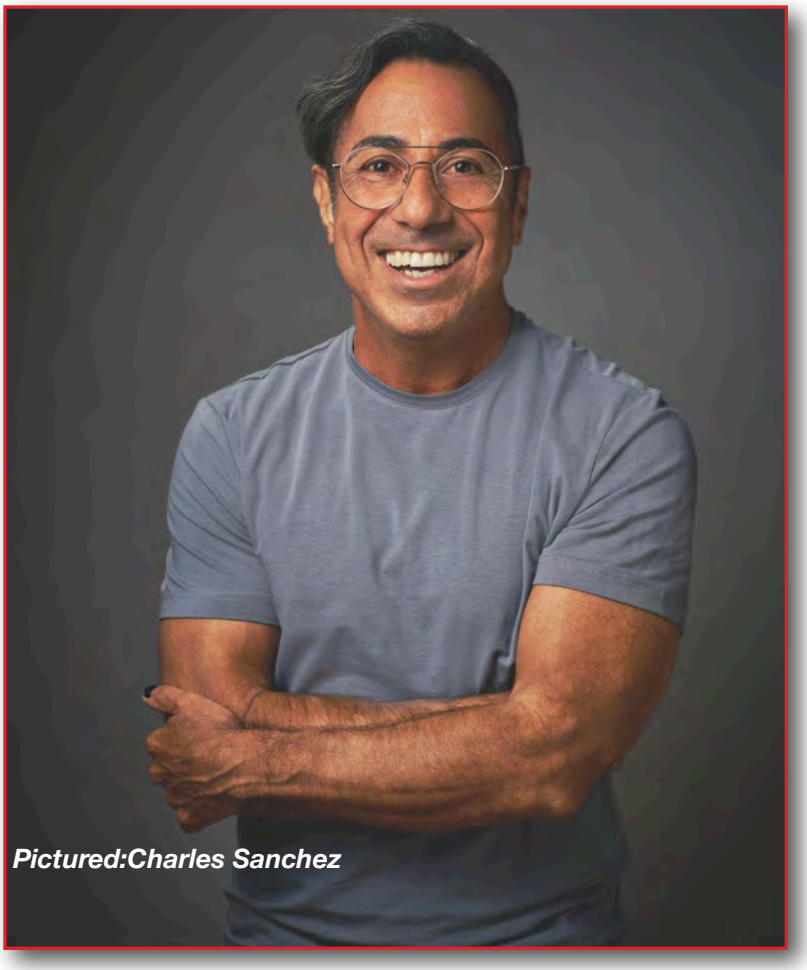
I freaked out. What the hell was I supposed to do? I took a deep breath and let it out. And I remembered once a boss telling me, "If you can make the pile of crap, you can clean up the pile of crap." I didn't like that boss, but recalling that sentence gave me a little comfort. I can fix this.

I spoke to the benefits specialist at GMHC, my local HIV service organization, and she said I should try to stay on disability if possible because once you're off it, it's difficult to get back on. Regarding the $85,000, she said that while the government will get their money one way or another, it wasn't the end of the world, and I could be on a payment plan. A good friend who's a lawyer told me, "Don't make the government your priority, since you certainly aren't theirs."

The good news was that I can stay on Medicare as long as I pay the $170.10 monthly premium, so that's a relief. I've been able to create work situations (one of them this very publication) that keep me eating, with a roof over my head and cable TV.

Ending My Disability Benefits

I've appealed to the government for them to forgo repayment of the money they say I owe them since I don't have money or any assets: savings, land, a house, a car. I live in a rented basement "efficiency" apartment in New York City, and right now my monthly income averages just above the poverty level. My biggest asset is my laptop computer — and the space bar on the keyboard sticks. The latest missive from the government told me that they received my request, and I am once again "under review."



Pictured:Charles Sanchez

This has been one of the most frightening experiences of my life. I had to fight the urges to hide and bury my head in the sand, and face the big bad government head on. Through this fear, therapy has helped, along with talking to other folks in the HIV community, friends and colleagues. Eating copious amounts of chocolatey goodness also calmed my manic panics. If you find yourself in a similar situation, I recommend reaching out to your local HIV service organization for guidance and support, and if you can afford one, a lawyer who specializes in Social Security Disability. I also recommend having a bag of Snickers on hand for emergencies.

I have been off disability, no longer receiving benefits, since October 2021. It's scary, but it feels good to be earning my own money and not having to rely on Uncle Sam. I like that the cloud of shame that I carried with me for so long is gone.

But why was there such a cloud of shame? I needed help. I was without resources for a time. I am single. I was scared. People sometimes derisively say that public assistance is just a crutch. We need to remember that a crutch isn't a bad thing when you need it to help you walk.

Charles Sanchez is a Mexican American, queer, writer/director/actor/producer living with HIV. His award-winning musical comedy web series, "Merce," is about a fabulous HIV-positive guy living in New York who isn't sad, sick or dying. This column is a project of TheBody, Plus, Positively Aware, POZ and Q Syndicate, the LGBTQ+ wire ***service. Visit their websites – http://thebody.com, http://hivplusmag.com, http://positivelyaware.com*** *and* ***http://poz.com*** *– for the latest updates on HIV/AIDS.*

GRAB HOLLY

A Plague of Harpies Descends

By Holly Maholm

I exited the office of Larry, vice-principal at the high school, where he had described to me the infestation of "mean girls" now firmly in control of all levers of power at the school. These "mean girls" were not the usual "popular kids" (the prettiest girls and most athletic young men). No. This was a group made up of young teachers recently graduated from the Gender Studies Department of the local university. Notice I do not describe them as "female," as doing so would represent a flagrant example of "assuming their gender." This I would never dare do, inasmuch as they guard the name of their invented, imaginary gender as jealously as their equally preposterous pronouns.

Looking down the corridor, I saw one of the Lunch Ladies ("Betty"), whom I met back when I first encountered Dave and his LGBT students. Dave showed me, then, the unique curriculum his students were pursuing in which they studied works authored by various immortal historians, philosophers and statesmen of ancient Greece and Rome. I called to Betty, and we stepped into the kitchen, to chat.

"I'm here," I began, "because I've agreed to represent Dave in the complaint filed against him by one of the students." Betty replied. "That's great! All of us in the kitchen heard about that – which is ridiculous!" She looked around for a seat, and seeing two stools nearby, suggested, "Let's sit down. I spend all day on my feet, and they're killing me." We perched ourselves on the stools.

"Look, Holly," she began, "things are not like they were before. It used to be, every year we would get a few new teachers, mostly young women freshly graduated from the Education Department at the college. Then, before too long – two or three years, maybe – those young teachers would get married and then show up pregnant. Sometimes they would stick around for a while, but usually they would quit teaching to care for their child. Lots of young teachers did this.

"And we Lunch Ladies loved it! As you can guess, every one of us is either a mother with several teenagers at home, or a grandmother with kids and grandkids. We loved to get to know the new young teachers, cause it gave us so much satisfaction to hear their stories of guys they were dating, and their engagements and weddings. We live for that stuff!

"And you know, lots of those teachers – after their kids got old enough to take the bus home by themselves – would come back to our school as teachers again. We Lunch Ladies did what we could to support those new young mothers; just like we supported Dave and his LGBT students, who tried to eat the same meals that Roman soldiers ate."

She took a deep breath, then went on. "But, now, everything has changed. The new young teachers are mostly Gender Studies graduates, and that's all they know. They have pink or blue hair and lots of unattractive tattoos and piercings. They're always wearing these obnoxious nametags with their name (which they change from week to week), their gender (which none of us has ever heard of) and their pronouns (and God Help You! if you don't use them). What's odd is that they don't seem to 'date' anyone – you know, no young man who might want to marry them. Instead, we hear them laughing about how some guy tried to talk to them, and so they told him to 'take his patriarchy and get lost!'

"You can imagine how disappointed we are here in the kitchen, where being a mother or grandmother is something to be proud of, and being able to plan and cook a healthy, tasty meal for a family is a skill we value. But for some reason, the Gender Studies types are real hostile to us. Maybe it's because we've all been married, or because we have husbands, boyfriends, sons and grandsons who are members of that 'patriarchy' they despise.

"We talked to Dave about how hateful they were behaving, and he decided he had to find a way to help his students deal with all that hostility. He wanted his students to know what to reply when one of them said something rude or snotty about Dave's Ancient Roman curriculum. So… Dave went for help to Phyllis, who you know likes to tell people she's the 'High Priestess of Athena, Goddess of Wisdom and Justice.'

"So Phyllis researched all the Roman Gods and Goddesses, after which she concluded that those Gender Studies graduates are actually a flock of 'Harpies!' Which –according to the Romans –were nasty, violent birds with a woman's face, whom Zeus would send to peck out the eyeballs of the Wicked on their way to Eternal Punishment in the Afterlife. Which… to us sounds about right."

(To be continued)

Holly Maholm is a transgender woman living in Cleveland, Ohio. Look for Holly's book Offered Magic: My Life Among the Unicorns (now available on Amazon) which collects the first 126 episodes of Holly's adventures involving both magical unicorns and her LGBTQ friends. Send a message to Holly at ***www.hollymaholm.com.***

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Photos By Anthony Meade

The Baton Show Lounge

GRAB A PLANE

PACIFIC PARADISE: YOUR VISIT TO HONOLULU

By Bill Malcolm

Honolulu makes for a great beach holiday. I recently spent five days there and enjoyed the beaches, culture and tropical vegetation. It was just a four-hour plus flight from Oakland and I snagged a great fare on Southwest. I stayed at the fun Surfjack Hotel and Swim Club which has a lobby with a pool in the center, free sunscreen, and a live music (and other events every night). The 10-story hotel is next door to Bacchus, a fun gay bar as well as the In Between Bar just a block away. The nearby ABC store has everything you need. The property has a surf themed personality with charm (and great service) not available at the chains and high rises. Plus you get a deck or lanai to relax and enjoy the tropical breezes.

WHAT TO DO

Don't miss the Foster Arboretum in the center of the city. It showcases the amazing vegetation of this tropical island. Enjoy the huge trunk of the Kapok tree and the many palms including the double coconut palm. The cannonball tree has huge fruits that was several pounds.

Enjoy the artwork of Hawaiian artists at the Hawaii State Art Museum.

Stop by the beautiful 'Iolani Palace which was home to the Hawaiian monarchy. Enjoy the statute of King Kamehameha united the islands into one country. (Unfortunately, I learned the U.S. was behind his overthrow and takeover of the Island.)

Tour the State Capitol and 'Iolani Palace.

Walk around the beautiful campus of the University of Hawaii.

Lay back and catch some rays at the nearby Fort DeRussy beach. It also features great views of Diamond Head.

Walk or run with the Frontrunners Saturdays at 8:30 a.m. They meet behind the zoo.

Then grab breakfast and explore the Farmers' Market at the nearby Community College. (You can hike up to Diamond Head from there.) The College also has a botanical garden featuring a cactus display. You are on the dry side of Oahu here. Work out with the locals at the 24-Hour Fitness. The West Coast chain has a branch near Waikiki.

NIGHTLIFE

Bacchus (next door to the Surfjack) has an outdoor deck which is good for people watching. Try the Thai food at the restaurant next door.

Join in Karaoke night Sundays at In Between (just steps from Bacchus). Filled with friendly locals, it's Honolulu non touristy culture at its best. The Velvet Lounge has sexy supplies just upstairs from the bar which is located in an alley off the main drag.

Catch the sunset at Hula's (on the second floor of the Grand Hotel) and enjoy happy hour Monday through Friday. They too have many special events including a catamaran cruise some Saturdays. You will find them at 134 Kapahulu on the second floor of the Grand Hotel.

Dance the night away at the new Atlas Club. Have a drink with locals at Tapas.

GETTING THERE

I took Southwest non-stop from Oakland and returned to Phoenix. They have great fares to Honolulu and other cities on the island (and inter island service for only $39). No charge for checked bags and you can change your ticket for free if you

need to. Unlike American, they don't over sell their flights, nor do they annoy you with emails asking you to give up your seat for $300. Best of all, they do not outsource their airline as the other carriers do (via "regional jets" operated by other companies).

From the airport, take the #20 bus (known as The Bus) to your hotel in Waikiki. It's a bargain and runs frequently. You can take The Bus everywhere around town (and around Waikiki).

WHERE TO EAT

Grab some local dishes at Da Spot, 2469 King Street and also enjoy their great smoothies.

Nearby the Down to Earth Natural Living (2525 S. King) which has a great food bar including salads and fresh juices. You can eat upstairs.

The ABC Stores (including the one near the hotel at 408 Lewers) has everything you need for your vacation including the Japanese inspired snack, musubi. It is a block of white rice with a slice of meat (including spam or "salmon flakes") on top with a thin wrapper of dried seaweed to hold it together. Also try the papaya. Wash it down with a coconut or pineapple juice.

WHERE TO STAY

The aforementioned Surfjack is my go to. I have stayed there twice. Unlike other hotels, they are currently not charging a resort fee. There is so much to do the property (great espresso bar which also sells tropical clothes and more, restaurant which provides food and beverage service around the pool, live music and other events nightly, etc.), you will not want to leave. The spacious rooms are amazing and feature balconies or lenais.

Check out the handmade furniture. It's popular with locals and hotel guests and has a personality missing from the other rise chain hotels. It's the Trader Joe's of hotels in Waikiki. This place has a fun and tropical vibe. You will find them at 412 Lewers.

TRAVEL TIPS

Book your hotel before your flight as hotel rates vary and can be expensive at times.

Learn the Hawaiian language. Aloha not only means welcome but peaceful and friendly. Please practice Aloha at all times.

Wear plenty of sunscreen (free at the Surfjack). You are in the tropics.

Bill Malcolm is America's only syndicated LGBTQ+ value travel columnist. His column appears in LGBTQ+ publications in Florida, Seattle, Toronto, Chicago, and other cities.

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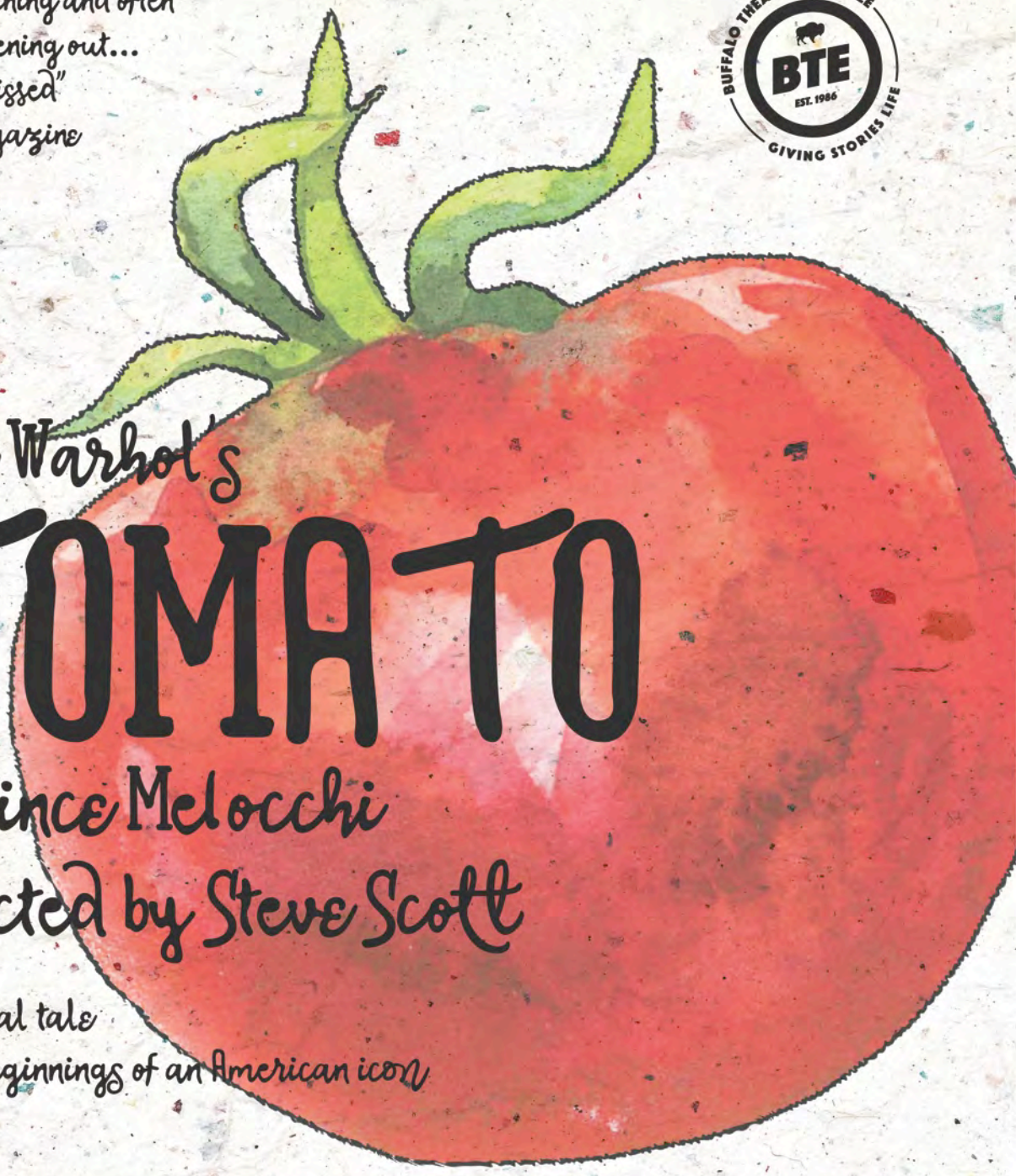

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Directed by Steve Scott

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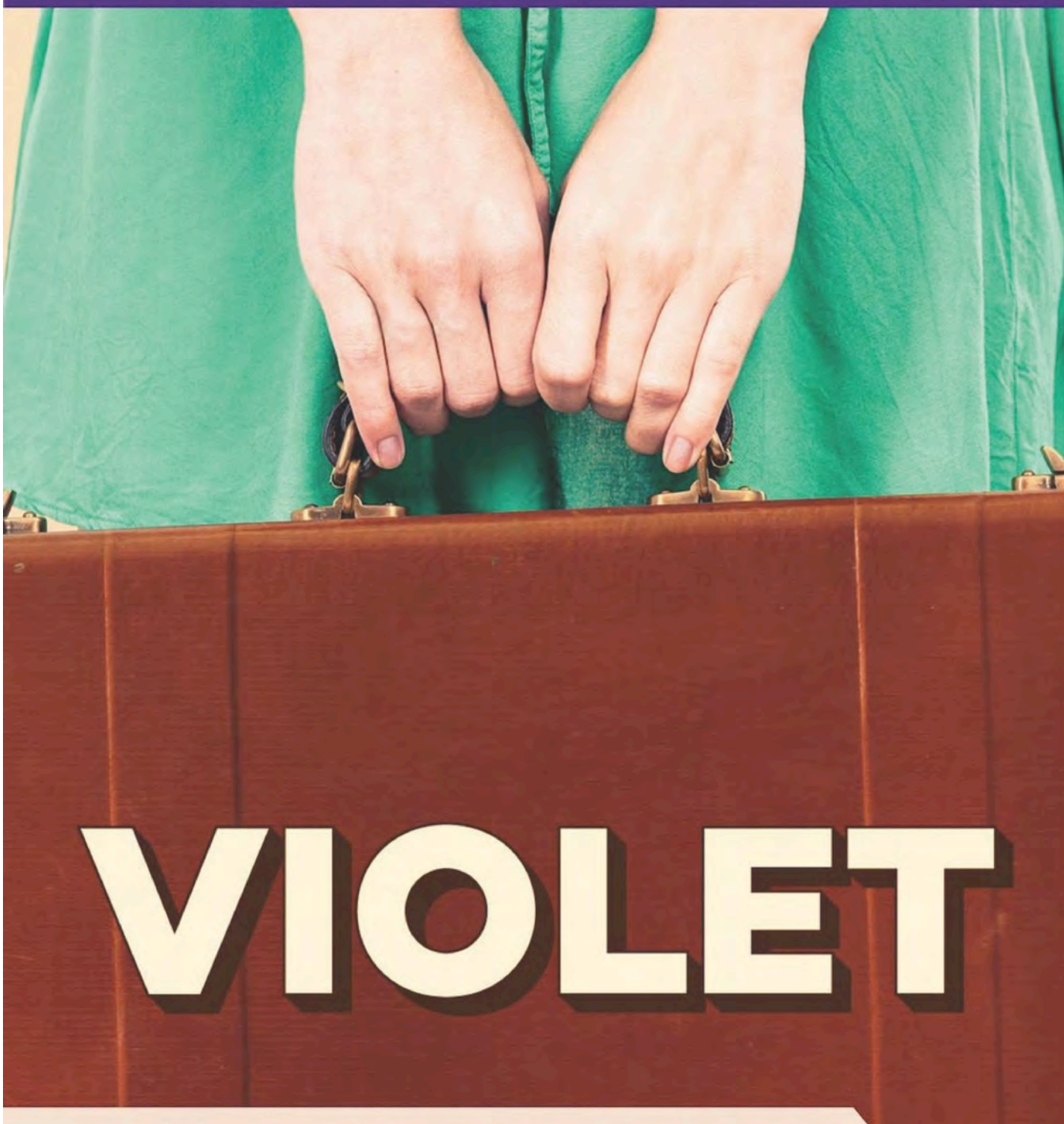

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IN ADVANCE OF THE BLOCKBUSTER "WARHOL" SUMMER 2023 EXHIBITION, BUFFALO THEATRE ENSEMBLE PRESENTS *"ANDY WARHOL'S TOMATO"* FEB. 2 – MARCH 5

In anticipation of the upcoming exhibition "Warhol: Featuring Andy Warhol
Portfolios: A Life in Pop / Works from the Bank of America Collection" hosted by the Cleve Carney
Museum of Art (CCMA) and McAninch Arts Center (MAC), Buffalo Theatre Ensemble (BTE), the
professional Equity company in residence at the McAninch Arts Center presents Vince Melocchi's
"Andy Warhol's Tomato." Guest director Steve Scott directs this 80-minute fictitious tale of unlikely
friendship and inspiration running Feb. 2 – March 5.
It is 1946 in Pittsburgh. An 18-year-old Andy Warhol finds himself in the basement of the working-
class bar. Over a summer, Andy gives and gets inspiration, guidance, and friendship from a surprising
source. Splash Magazines calls *"Andy Warhol's Tomato,"* "a not-to-be-missed study of what goes into
achieving the goals of self-understanding and acceptance...an entertaining and often humorous
evening out." The Santa Monica Press says, "If you didn't know this was fiction, you'd think you were
watching Andy's origin story. A Delicious Tomato."

For tickets or more information about BTE's season, visit
AtTheMAC.org or call the Box Office ***630.942.4000.***

ABOUT FACE THEATRE ANNOUNCES NEW MEMBERS OF ITS GREEN ROOM COLLECTIVE, A PROGRAM TO SUPPORT LGBTQ+ LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARTS

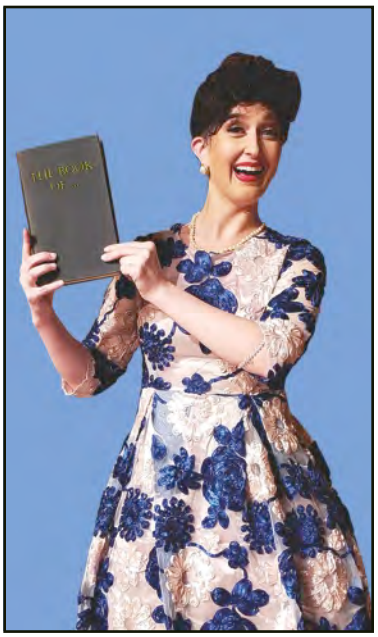
About Face Theatre announces theatre artists ***Theo Wampusyc*** and ***Pen Wilder*** as the 2023 members of its Green Room Collective, a program for early career LGBTQ+ arts leaders. Wampusyc (he/they) is a trans actor, podcaster, and entertainer with a special focus on audio,activism, and joy, and Wilder (they/them) is a playwright and artist focusing on queer theatre. They follow the inaugural members of the Green Room Collective, Kirsten Baity and Sharon Pasia, who wereGRC members for the 2021-2022 season.
"The Green Room Collective's inaugural year was a great success," said AFT Managing Director ***Logan Jones***. "This season, we're proud to build on the GRC's achievements and continue About Face's commitment to lifting up emerging voices. Pen and Theo have so much to offer the artistic community."I'm so glad that About Face will be part of their continued journey."
About Face Theatre launched the Green Room Collective in 2021 to support early-career LGBTQ+ artsleaders in their theatre-related career and educational goals. The program is built on over two decades of leadership work at AFT. The program is named for the "green room" in a theatre, a backstage area where artists prepare for performance. The green room is a space for camaraderie and community,
vulnerability and questioning. The Green Room is often the last stop before you take the stage. TheGreen Room Collective program embraces these aspects to create a supportive platform to springboardyoung leaders in the LGBTQ+ community toward the advancement of their goals.
Learn more at
aboutfacetheatre.com

Chicago Premiere! I PROMISED MYSELF TO LIVE FASTER CONCEIVED AND CREATED BY PIG IRON THEATRE COMPANY onceived and Created by Pig Iron Theatre Company MARCH 23 – APRIL 16, 2023 AT THE CHOPIN THEATRE

Hell in a Handbag Productions is pleased to continue its 21 st season
with the Chicago premiere of I Promised Myself to Live Faster, an intergalactic queer extravaganza

This space epic tells the tale of our reluctant hero Tim (Robert Williams*) who's been put through an
emotional ringer these past few months. Tim's life takes a radical turn when an order of intergalactic
nuns charge him with a quest: retrieve the Holy Gay Flame from the clutches of the evil emperor to save
the race of Homosexuals and restore the balance of power in the universe. Once Tim is captured by the
fabulously androgynous Ah-Ni (David Cerda*), Tim goes places he never dreamed in this ridiculous and
delirious allegorical adventure.
featuring closeted extraterrestrials, high stakes pursuits and nuns from outer space, created and
conceived by Pig Iron Theatre Company, with text by Greg Moss and Pig Iron and directed by JD
Caudill*. I Promised Myself to Live Faster will play March 23 – April 16, 2023 at The Chopin
Upstairs Theatre, 1543 W. Division St. in Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood. Tickets are now on sale
at **buytickets.at/hellinahandbagproductions/825817** or **handbagproductions.org.**

THE BOOK OF MERMAN MUSIC AND LYRICS BY LEO SCHWARTZ AND DC CATHRO FEB 3- FEB 26



MadKap Productions is pleased to present *The Book of Merman* for 13 live performances at the Skokie Theatre, 7924 Lincoln Ave in Downtown Skokie. Feb 3 – Feb 26, 2023.

The Book of Merman is a hilarious new musical comedy filled with original songs. Broadway's biggest star collides with one of Broadway's biggest hits when, after a frustrating day of canvassing the neighborhood for prospective converts, two Mormon missionaries knock on the door of legendary belter EthelMerman. Mistaking the two young men for door-to-door salesmen, Ethel welcomes them in, resulting in a clever and witty journey about being true tooneself and embracing who you really are.

Ethel Merman is played by ***Julie Peterson***, who understudied & performed therole in the Off-Broadway run back in 2018. She has been seen recently inChicago Danztheatre's production of This Is Not A Pipe and in A Proper Place at

The Good speed Opera House. She is joined by ***Alex Iacobucci*** as ElderBraithwaite and ***Danny Ferenczi*** as Elder Shumway.

Tickets can be purchased online at ***SkokieTheatre.org*** or by calling ***847-677-7761.***

CURIOUS THEATRE BRANCH & BEAUTIME CABARET PRESENT *THIS IS NOT A CHURCHILL* FOUR SHORT PLAYS IN RESPONSE TO CARYL CHURCHILL FRIDAYS & SATURDAYS IN FEBRUARY AT FACILITY THEATRE

Curious Theatre Branch and BeauTown Cabaret bring together more than 20 of Chicago fringe theatre's best writers, directors and performers for This Is Not a Churchill, four short plays paying homage to playwright Caryl Churchill. This funny, experimental and surprising collection of new works will be presented Fridays and Saturday at 8 pm from February 3 – 25, 2023 at Facility Theatre, 1138 N. California Ave. in Chicago.

This Is Not a Churchill is a response to Caryl Churchil's 1999 experimental play This is a Chair, in which heavy topical news bulletins are each followed by a scene that has that has nothing to with the news announcement. Chicago playwrights ***Beau O'Reilly, Jayita Bhattacharya*** and ***Ira Murfin, Chris Bower*** and ***Chris Zdenek*** followed Churchill's lead and created four original works that riff on the play's titular disconnections and the troubling, hilarious and inexplicable nature of our co-existences.

The full line-up includes:

•*The Umbrella Disguise* - written by ***Beau O'Reilly***, directed by ***Chris Bower***

• *(Not) What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* – written by ***Jayita Bhattacharya*** and ***Ira Murfin***, directed by ***Jeffrey Bivens***

• ***How To Fix Your Fatigue*** *(Do This Everyday)* – written and directed by ***Chris Bower***

• ***This Is Not a Play by Caryll Churchill, Titled This Is a Chair*** – written and directed by ***Chris Zdenek***

The cast includes ***Marz Allswede, Jim Christensen, Candace Lee Conner, Jake Flum, Kristin Garrison, Kristy Lockhart, Barry Lohman, Rauly Luna, Shaun Rosten, Andrew Schoen, Kevin Sparrow, Hannah Tymosko, Vicki Walden, Maggie Ward*** and ***Penny Lous Zimmerman***.

Tickets ($15 or pay-what-you-can) are now on sale through Brown Paper Tickets at **m.bpt.me/event/5697525.**

STEPPENWOLF THEATRE CONTINUES ITS 47TH SEASON WITH THE CHICAGO PREMIERE OF LAST NIGHT AND THE NIGHT BEFORE APRIL 6 – MAY 14

Steppenwolf Theatre Company, the nation's premier ensemble theater company, is pleased to continue its 47th season with the Chicago premiere of Donnetta Lavinia Grays' Last Night and the Night Before, a powerful, poetic exploration of what it takes to create a future from a past you long to forget. Directed by Valerie Curtis-Newton, Last Night and the Night Before will play April 6 – May 14, 2023 in Steppenwolf's Downstairs Theater, 1650 N. Halsted St. in Chicago.

Last Night and the Night Before will feature ensemble member ***Namir Smallwood*** with ***Ayanna Bria Bakari***, ***Sydney Charles, Aliyana Hamood, Kylah Renee Jones*** and ***Jessica Dean Turner.***

Monique is on the run. From what, she will not say. Showing up on the doorstep of her sister's Brooklyn brownstone with her timid daughter Sam – and without her husband – their arrival raises more questions than it answers. As the specter of their abandoned life in Georgia creeps back into focus, the family is forced to consider what must be sacrificed to break a cycle of despair. Poetic and heartbreaking, Donnetta Lavinia Grays' stunning portrait of Black Love explores what it takes to nurture family in an often-cruel world.

Tickets for *Last Night* and *the Night Before* are now on sale at ***steppenwolf.org*** and the Box Office at ***(312) 335-1650.***

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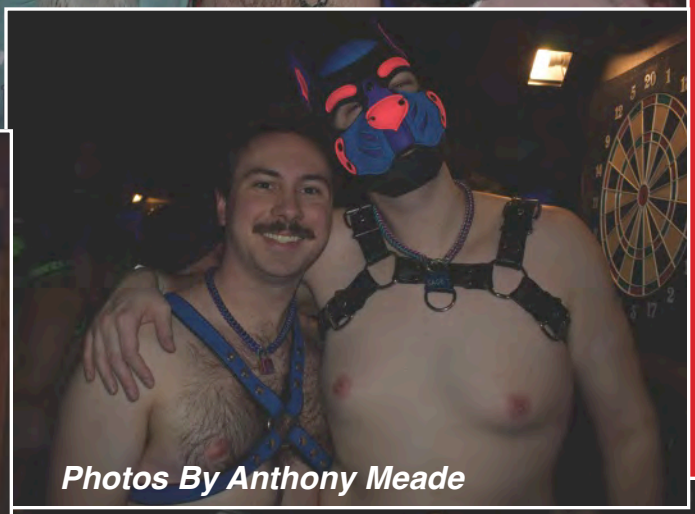

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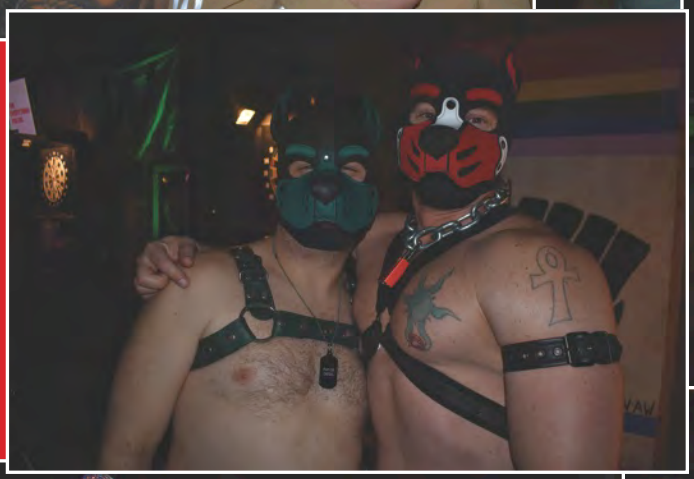

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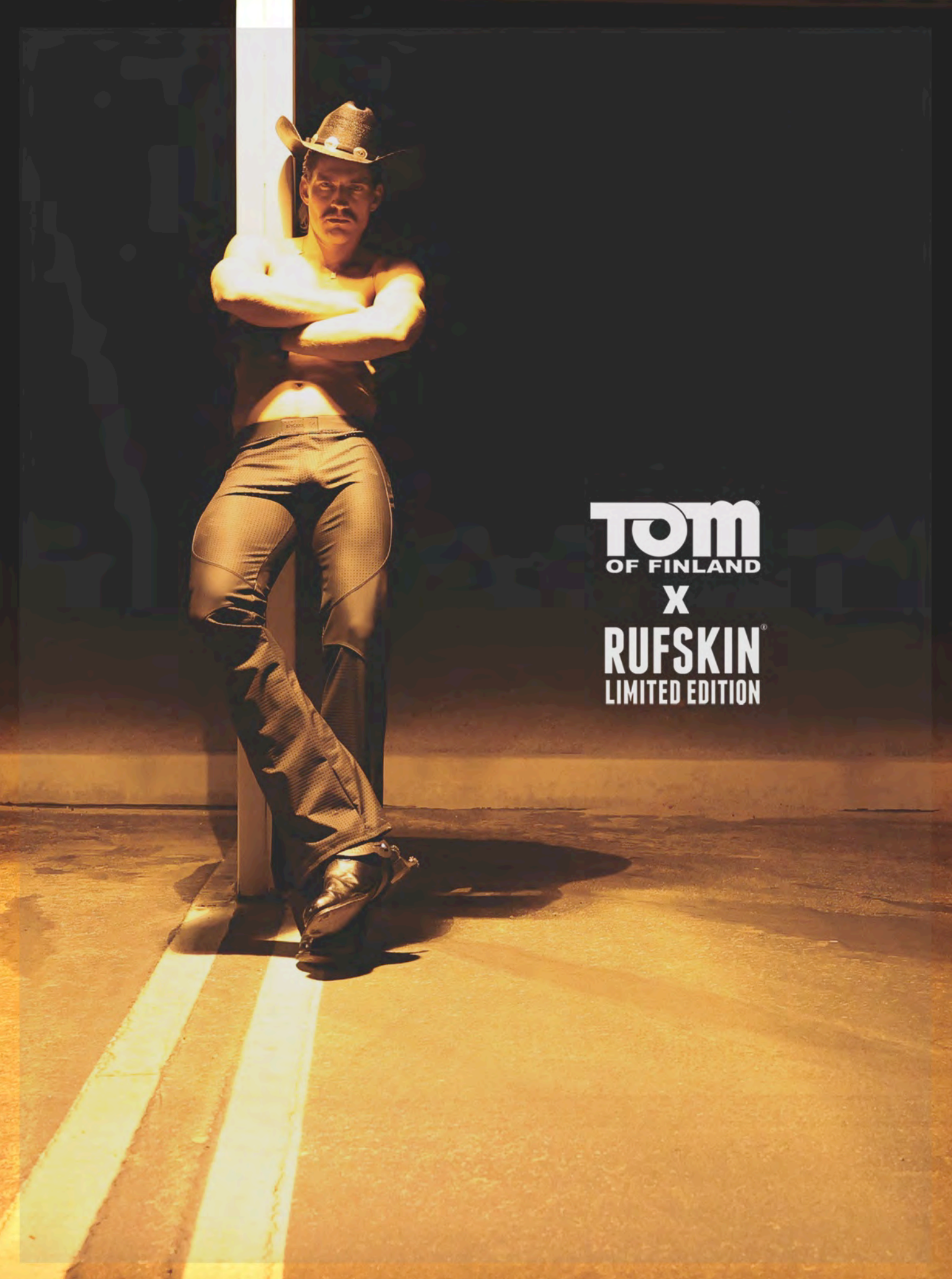
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